

## Managing Low Back Pain: Practical Tips on Do's and Don'ts

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Low Back Pain is a symptom and not a disease. Most episodes of Low Back Pain are self-limiting with little or no consequence and will often resolve without treatment. All international guidelines recommend triaging low back pain to

1. Possible serious pathology or “Red Flags” – vertebral fractures, malignancy, infection or Cauda Equina Syndrome in about 1-2% of cases.
2. Nerve root pain resulting from herniated disc or spinal stenosis in about 5% of cases.
3. Low back pain with no specific cause in about 85-95% of cases.

This triage especially in the first 2 groups will often lead to investigations usually an MRI, a pathological diagnosis and specific treatment. However, a similar approach will not be beneficial in about 85-95% of patients with Non-specific Low Back Pain. Often in this group it will lead to unnecessary MRI's and unnecessary procedures.

In my lecture, I will highlight how most Health Care Professionals continue to over rely on MRI's in making a diagnosis. I will also discuss the inherent problems with MRI that we often overlook.

I believe that the mainstay of treatment in Non-specific Low Back Pain is self-care. This can be achieved through

1. Education
2. Promote usual activities – to hurt does not mean to harm
3. Graduated stretches and exercises